

Brussels, 2 September 2005

The European Commission strengthens dialogue with China on employment and social affairs

The EU and China will hold regular meetings and exchanges of information on employment and social affairs issues under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed on Monday, 5 September 2005 at the EU-China summit. The MoU, between the European Commission and the Chinese government, will provide the framework for dialogue on areas such as social protection, social cohesion, labour legislation, employment, labour relations and social dialogue. Each side will visit the other at least once a year in Brussels and Beijing alternately.

China has shown particular interest in the EU's experience in the area of social security systems. It is also interested in the EU's integrated approach to competition, employment and social cohesion as it is engaged in a major process of change drive by the concept of 'harmonious development'. China's economic growth, as well as changes in its labour market and demography involving huge internal migration flows, have made these issues policy priorities.

The first policy dialogue event taking place under the MoU will be in Beijing on 6 September, focusing on vocational training and human resources. Following this, a work programme setting out the dates and themes for future meetings will be agreed by the EU and China.

A joint EU-China €40million technical assistance project on social security reform is due to get underway in Beijing early next year. This will see a team of experts from the EU provide assistance and know-how in areas such as social security collection issues and compilation of reliable statistics.

The two sides have been moving towards an MoU since the Chinese Minister for Labour and Social Security visited the European Commission in November 2001 when agreement was reached on areas and a possible basis for future cooperation. The MoU will be in force for four years. The EU already has similar MoUs with the USA and Japan.